



AMONG THE WILD BEASTS

A Series of Hunting Stories.

A BLACK LION.

BY DR. J. HANFORD PORTER, AUTHOR OF "WILD BEASTS," ETC.

The Niger rolled around its great bend like an inland sea. It was the season for storms, and its surf, which never ceases, broke before a strong northwester with an echo of that heavy and hollow sound one hears upon ocean shores.

Ospreys and kingfishers, maroon storks, metallic blackbirds, Guinea fowl and trumpeters, flamingoes and pelicans, screamed or flashed, stalked, swooped, or soared in all directions. A blazing tropical sun rose above the surrounding forest, and Prof. Koenigstein sat under a butter-tree watching them.

"At I care for the Hauptmann (Captain Wells) has seen?" he roared. "Dere is no black lion species nover; nider gell, dot you calls yellow, nor yet red or gray. Lions shows all dese colors, but it is accidental—shunt like dey laf names or had dem not, as de case may be. Nein! nein! Und it is de curse of nature-historic, dot egoism dot makes men to classify mitout a reason."

All this and more, because I said Capt. Wells saw a black lion the day before.

Four of us were camped below what was then the smoking forest, and Prof. Koenigstein sat under a butter-tree watching them.

Great woodlands stretched away indefinitely, broken by broad spaces of savanna, with scrub jungle and reed brake.

This region also harbored beings that a well-developed instinct of self-preservation might prompt people to avoid; among the rest, lions, leopards, wild elephants, with numerous constrictors and poisonous snakes, besides plundering, murdering Tonaques, these latter also called "veiled men," on account of the nich, or scarf, in which they envelop their heads and faces. Soudanese natives never speak of them otherwise than as "thieves, hyenas, and the abandoned of God."

Certainly, they "did evil exceedingly" in those days, but such a party as this could go almost anywhere, and it was too great a game country to be abandoned because we might get our throats cut. It had not the advantage of India, where one may generally beat for game, no except in the following of a fresh trail or stalking some animal accidentally seen, our trust was reposed in the macho or skarm—tree-platform or covered trench.

These were placed near secluded pools, since even while the Niger's muddy flood lay near comparatively few wild beasts would go to water on an open shore.

What tremendous things had we not seen during our night watches? What wild dramas of earth's waste places, such as only far-traveled hunters behold? Think of being alone in an immense loose menagerie, where the beasts are undisturbed by human contact and unshaded by captivity. Imagine the excitement, those ever-present risks, that constant and imperious demand upon training, nerve, and skill. He who has breathed the desert air, upon whose spirit such impressions as these have set their seal, is changed—at once and permanently.

We idled most of that day upon which Prof. Koenigstein delivered his opinion concerning lions, and stretched our limbs, cramped by a long canoe journey. Moreover, forest and plain were drenched during the after-

noon by a short, fierce tornado, and it would have been well-nigh impossible to hunt.

But next morning our Boos—Nigerian boatmen who said they were descendants of fugitives from the mountains of Ethiopia—received their pay and departed. We struck off eastward into the wilderness.

A French officer going down stream on one of those long, comfortable Sonnos boats in the Niger, had said that the lion's paradise, and this was sought according to his directions. It lay at the base of a mountain spur, whose blue peaks could be seen at intervals when our view cleared, and after four days marching we entered a beautiful park country alive with game.

Our first need was to construct an encampment that would be both comfortable and secure. Africa, however, is rarely destitute of materials for this purpose, and before long rain-proof grass huts were built, and the zebra surrounded by a thorn fence such as no lion or leopard could surmount. As for the elephant, he has not sense enough to break a barrier, however frail, and will im-

potently rage about in an inclosure no more capable of resisting his strength than if it were made of cowbells.

The camp stood close by a broad ravine running back and finally losing itself among a labyrinth of gorges and gullies, and there was no water except near its mouth, where several pools had been formed.

Nothing could have suited us better, supposing that trees grew near enough; but that was only the case in one instance, so according to custom we cast lots for choice of position, and Wells and myself were forced to construct a skarm. This is always one of the most difficult and delicate operations.

When finished no sign of its presence must remain, while fresh earth has to be thrown on every footstep, for an elephant will scent a trail 24 hours old with unflinching certainty. For this reason our numerous and headless attendants needed to be kept away from its vicinity, and sent by roundabout routes to fetch water in smaller reservoirs.

It would sound like an exaggeration if I attempted any description of the number and variety of animals seen. This place reminded me of Sir Samuel Baker's famous camp in Masai-land, where the wild was constantly surrounded by lions. They often came very close, and on the night we arrived one restless savage paced around our zebra hedge for hours—probably the same black lion that tracked Wells and myself soon afterwards, and but for good fortune would have made an end of us.

Wild animals drink at different hours; thus we started early on the second evening, in order not to interfere with those who came first, and soon encircled ourselves in a ditch about 14 feet long and four and a half deep, which was roofed with heavy logs except at its ends, where Wells and myself were stationed. The night was dark, and the moon of the thick jungle in rear would deepen that obscurity in which our skarm lay, while before it everything was open for some distance beyond the lagune.

Birds came first, then small antelope, picking their way with delicate and hesitating steps. They were succeeded by oryx, the gnu, and eland, each coming with equal precaution, for drinking-places are dangerous localities on account of ambushes.

Dog-faced baboons and monkeys also ar-

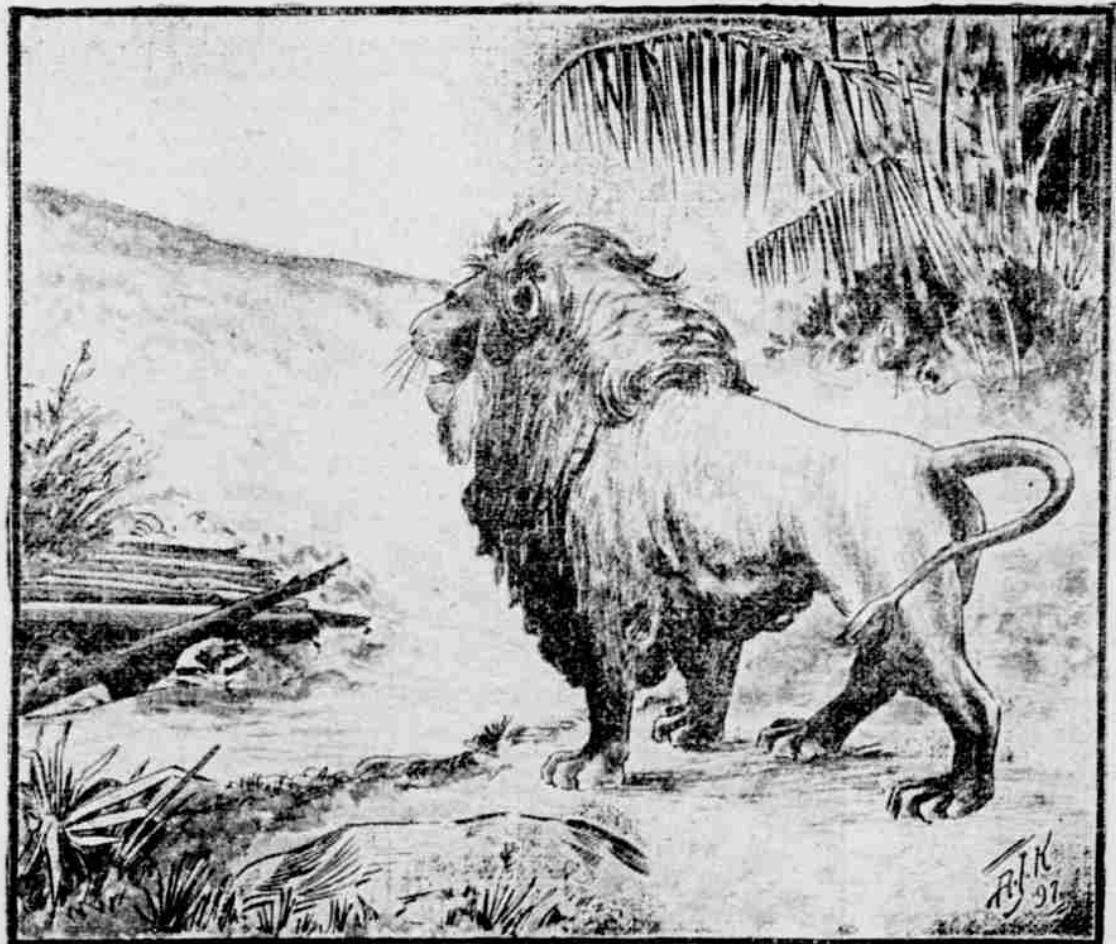
rived at an early hour, so as to avoid nocturnal prowling, the old and young of these latter exhibiting a ludicrously human degree of nervous irritation at the headlessness of their youngsters, who continually forgot about leopards, and scampered here and there, and got soundly cuffed when caught.

In the clear-ghence of a darker hour more imposing visitors appeared. Besides fierce-looking hyenas and hideous wart-hogs two besotted black rhinoceroses blundered in from opposite directions, and instantly began to fight. Afterwards, with heavy tramp and cavernous bellowing, a herd of great African buffaloes galloped on to the opposite ridge. They had been stampeded, but their panic must have been due to some imaginary danger, for what enemy except man can harm these colossal creatures while they remain together? As it was, an outlying troop of lions watched them longingly, but knew better than to attack.

As time went on two or three panthers glided to the brink and drank; but except a single harsh, high trumpet soon informed the herd that all was safe, and they quickly joined their consort. This band was composed of two families, each containing several generations, the second one being led by another patriarch nearly equal to the first in size. A family is the constant unit of all elephantine aggregates, irrespective of numbers, and when these break up they usually select themselves into those natural groups again.

Of course, we desired to shoot the big tuskers, but, as if designedly, they continually faced us. There is no way to kill an elephant instantly except by a ball through its brain; but while in India the forehead shot can almost always be made, here it becomes impossible—or at least, only two instances of success are on record.

A bullet entering that triangular depression at the base of an Asiatic elephant's trunk at a proper angle will penetrate its brain. Not so with the other species, where this organ lies lower, and is effectively protected by a mass of dense tissue surrounding the sockets of its front teeth, which converge.



"HE WAS STANDING ERECT, LOOKING FOR THE PREY."

for an occasional interruption silence rested upon the scene, and it became utterly deserted. Elephants were our game that night, and save in case of necessity we would not fire at anything else. Neither of us, however, felt despondent at waiting, for not only did the African elephant range far more widely than his Asiatic relative, and is therefore liable to delay, but I think that he habitually drinks at a later hour, and, if there is danger, only on alternate nights.

So we watched with patience, until finally a gesture from Wells directed my attention to an indistinct black mass that faintly defined itself amidst the darkness, which was thickened on our right by crags and trees. It became momentarily more distinctly visible, however, till that grandest among terrestrial forms, the bull elephant of Africa, stood revealed. He looked jet-black, save his tusks gleaming in the starlight, and an apparition could not have come more silently.

A certain irrepressible sense of awe arose as one thought of what this vast creature might easily do. His ears were cocked, and that long, sinuous, massive trunk swept slowly through half the horizon. No taint in the air, no sound could have escaped him; but we were directly downwind; both of us remained perfectly quiet, and his sight being much more imperfect than the senses of hearing or scent, there was no likelihood of our being discovered.



"HE WAS STANDING ERECT, LOOKING FOR THE PREY."

Knowing this, neither of us pulled trigger until the one opposite Wells swung around, instantly receiving a two-ounce ball behind his shoulders. Amidst the frightful confusion that followed I got an equally good snap-shot at the other, and as both these animals fell within a short distance on the opposite slope, it was evident that some great vessels had been cut or they would not have gone down so soon.

The constellations had sunk toward the horizon, and a blanket was very comfortable at that chill coming before dawn, when our last adventure during that night occurred.

I admit, with shame, the imputation of having been more than half asleep, while Wells was slumbering peacefully. Men in skarms should stay awake, lest they become death-traps, as was almost the case with ours. Of course, it grew darker toward morning, gleaming in the starlight, and an apparition could not have come more silently.

Why? Nobody knows; therefore, men feel superstitions about such things, though the process implanted are plain enough. Anyway, there I was, strung to concert pitch and fully conscious that some imminent danger drew near. One learns to think quickly in jungles. What were those faint, intermittent, scarcely-audible sounds?

A panther stalking us? It could not be—no man ever heard a panther approaching him. Then a lion must have trailed us, for this was certainly some large and heavy body softly moving through the withered grass and rustling leaves. Presently a dry stick snapped, and then I was sure of the cause, although an attack in such wise could not have been anticipated from that still-hunting, ambush-hunting beast.

Crouching and peering out between the clouds piled behind our trench, I listened, afraid to speak lest a spring might be precipitated, and yet quite unable to measure distance or determine position with only a single sense. A very deep, hoarse hum seemed to pervade the whole air—nobody could have located its source, but I knew what it was, and that when lions or tigers feel sure of shedding blood, their pleasant anticipations lose so much nervous energy that complete quietness is impossible—they must twitch their tails and purr.

Apparently, several hours passed before two roving balls of fire met my gaze. Plainly he was then standing erect, looking for the prey whose scent gloved in his nostrils, and yet a shot was still too great a risk, for notwithstanding that this beast could not spring while in that position, I was evidently so low that my ball would most likely glance from the massive receding forehead, and such a contingency involved almost inevitable death.

Presently, however, the lion saw me. There may have been some unconscious movement or a sob from repressed breathing. Anyway, those wandering orbs slowly sank as he crouched, and every muscle in him braced itself to leap. This was the supreme moment!

Starting up I aimed with that automatic accuracy which practice alone can confer, but although a good shot the bullet struck too high, and notwithstanding he was half stunned the lion sprang. He fell short, nevertheless, and there was still another barrel, thank heaven, which instantly poured its contents between those gleaming fangs that gaped at the edge of our trench, and blew his hind head to pieces. But what if I had not awakened?

Will Stand by It.

G. L. Camp, Sergeant, Co. G, 92d Ohio, Seattle, Wash.: I believe the Per Diem Bill will suit nearly all the boys. I have just secured two subscribers for THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE. Every comrade should take it. It is worth a brigade of the best drilled soldiers to charge the works and carry them in behalf of the old veterans. It is the only paper that I know of that is on the skirmish-line all the time. My wife says "I live by it, and sleep by it," which is quite true. It stands by me, and so long as I can raise a dollar I shall not desert it or let its colors trail in the dust.

War Photography.

That the camera will play an important part in the future warfare is a foregone conclusion, but up to the present time the one thing that has been needed to make it more useful and quickly available in aerial work has been a simple and reliable lifting power, and this has apparently been found in the perfected form of the tailless kite. This kite, or a train of them, to which a camera can be fixed, will do the work of a balloon, and at no risk to human life. If an enemy cannot easily hit a balloon, how much less chance will there be of injury resulting to so small an object as a camera suspended a thousand feet or more in the air. Recent trials in Austria-Hungary and elsewhere have shown that kite balloons have little effect on captive balloons, even at low altitudes. Above 600 feet ordinary shells are almost useless, and even shrapnel are surprisingly ineffective.

LADIES: Write to Mrs. L. Hudson, South Bend, Ind. She sends FREE a simple home CURE for Leucorrhoea and all female troubles.

AS THEY VIEW IT.

Veterans' Opinions of the Pension Question.

Many comrades write THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE what they think about pensions. Below are given some of the views expressed. Charles Jenkins, Co. G, 24th N. Y. M'd Rifles, Louisville, Wash. writes: "I want to say a word in appreciation of your paper, and the work it is doing for the old soldiers. There are large numbers of the boys of '61 and '65 who are unable to earn a living. They are either receiving no pensions or the smallest that the law allows. Under these circumstances they are debarr'd medical treatment, or if by starving themselves and their families they save the necessary money for a visit to the physician, they are consoled with advice something like this: 'Keep quiet. Don't get over heated or tired. Eat plenty of good, nourishing food, and you can keep around comfortable for several years yet; but I can't cure you, nor can anybody else. You are generally broken down.'"

Samuel C. Meek, Post Commander of Slough Post, 6th Superior, N. M. The greatest injustice is being done worst veterans, especially those of longest terms of service. The 90-day men and the militia seem to have a greater hold on Uncle Sam's affections for very few of them are rated at less than \$12 per month. Such is the case all over the country. Congress should pass the Service Per Diem Pension Bill. Give the 90-day men \$12, and those of longer service the \$12 and its per diem of \$1 per day for every day's service added thereto. Then there will be no need of spending one dime of the pension appropriation for Medical Examiners and spotters and Special Examiners.

Rev. E. W. McIntosh, Indianapolis, Ind.: I am one of those who pension was cut down by the late Administration, and I have not yet been able to get it raised. A large part of my congregation are old veterans, and at a recent Sunday evening meeting a resolution was passed unanimously asking the Commissioner of Pensions to place on the rolls at the old rate all pensioners who have been dropped or reduced.

C. K. Ward, 8th Wis. battery, Kellogg, Idaho: I have been trying to get a pension for the last six years. A Special Examiner came in July. He told me I should have no further trouble, and my claim would be allowed within a month or two. I have heard nothing since. Wm. I. Brown, Baltimore, Md.: I read with interest the report of the G. A. R. Pension Committee. I believe that the time has come when a service pension based on the age of the claimant should be passed as an act of justice to the thousands who are daily growing too feeble to continue active work. I would suggest that House Bill No. 1876 of the first session of the 55th Congress, which provides for a pension for soldiers over 62 years of age, be amended to include those 53 years old. A soldier who is now 53 years old, helpless, and dependent upon the cold charities of the world would have to wait 10 years before he could be pensioned as the act now reads.

George Kendall, Shelburne, Mo.: "I see by the report of the Auditor of the Interior Department that the disbursement of pensions has cost the Government \$3.39 for each \$1,000. Why not pass a Service Pension Bill, and do away with much of the red tape and expense? Work for \$12 per month, and let every man who served 90 days and received an honorable discharge be placed on the roll. A soldier who served 90 days and received an honorable discharge, living at Mount Pleasant, Iowa, thinks that widows of soldiers, no matter when married, should be treated alike in the matter of pensions. He writes: 'If a veteran marries now his widow will receive no pension under the act of 1890, while the widow of a 90-day man, married before the legislation was enacted, will receive a pension under its provisions. This is not fair.'"

Chas. R. Tefft, 114th N. Y., Eastwood, Mich.: "Congress should pass a Service Pension Bill, giving at least \$3 per month to every honorably discharged soldier." J. P. Thompson, Skowhegan, Me.: "I am in favor of the Per Diem Bill. We who enlisted in 1861 and served until the close of the war deserve more than the 90-day men. I think THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE is one of the best papers printed, especially for the old soldiers. It has always been a true friend to us, and ought to be taken by every comrade."

PROSPECTUS

of The

National Tribune.

This paper has a very large circulation, but it has set about doubling it.

With perfect confidence that it can hold the increase during many years, it is satisfied to more than sacrifice the profits of the present year.

With this end in view, it makes an offer on this page of almost unexampled liberality.

Following will be found a brief prospectus of THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE for 1897-1898:

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New pension rulings (of great importance this year) appear first, and often exclusively, in this paper. Keep posted. It may "put much in the balance." All the old battles and departments of the paper will be kept up and improved.

THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE has the most distinguished contributors of any paper in the country. It is now publishing—

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Fighting Them Over. Short true stories of the war contributed by soldiers.

Public Buildings and Monuments. By Kate B. Sherwood.

Uncle Snowball. Personal Reminiscences of an Army Cook. The war viewed from the rear.

During the Autumn, Winter and coming year, it will publish—

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Si Klegg as a Veteran. His experience in the Atlanta Campaign and on the March to the Sea.

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Life of a Private in the Rebel Army. By J. P. Cannon, M. D.

The Santa Fe Trail in the Old Days, and a Journey to the Manitoba Country in 1849, both by Gen. John Pope, U. S. A.

F. Smith & Co. A Sketch of the War. By the Soldier-Author, Albion W. Tourgee.

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By JOHN McELROY, Late of Co. L, 16th Ill. Cav.

Hundreds of illustrations. Large type; 320 pages.



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It is impossible, briefly, to give an adequate description of the scope and character of this immortal chapter in the history of the civil war. It deals with a great subject, and one little understood, because it was a tragedy enacted behind the scenes, obscured by the smoke of battle in front. While the public was kept daily informed of march and siege and desperate attack and repulse, fixing the attention upon the ever-changing panorama of active warfare, the voice of heroes dying in prison-pens was lost. No news came from the men herded like cattle beyond the mountains of the South. The Nation knew little of the horrors behind the Stockade.

The author of Andersonville has told a thrilling story. If it has horrors they are not of his invention.

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BY AUGUSTUS BUELL.

Story of a Private Soldier.

FULLY AND GRAPHICALLY ILLUSTRATED.



THEY BECOME PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCES AND FRIENDS, AND THE READER GETS BREATHLESSLY INTERESTED IN THEM.

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AND STEALTHILY CROSSING THE WHOLE BREADTH OF THE CONFEDERACY IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS, IS EQUALLY MARVELOUS; WHILE THE SAD TRAGEDY THAT OCCURRED AT ATLANTA IS FRESHLY AND VIVIDLY REMEMBERED BY THE INHABITANTS OF THAT BEAUTIFUL CITY AFTER THE LAPSE OF MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS.

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The joy of their deliverance when they finally assured that they were once more safe under the Union flag is told with a pathos that would be impossible to one who had not experienced the sensation of the moment. This book will be a gem in any library.



THE JOY OF THEIR DELIVERANCE WHEN THEY FINALLY ASSURED THAT THEY WERE ONCE MORE SAFE UNDER THE UNION FLAG IS TOLD WITH A PATHOS THAT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO ONE WHO HAD NOT EXPERIENCED THE SENSATION OF THE MOMENT. THIS BOOK WILL BE A GEM IN ANY LIBRARY.

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